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Identical letters dated 24 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the fiftieth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017) (S/2018/369).

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regrets that the authors of the reports of the Secretary-General and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) continue to take a politicized, negative and hostile approach to the Syrian Arab Republic and institutions.

The report under consideration is the fiftieth presented to the Security Council on the implementation of the resolutions concerning the humanitarian situation in Syria, and dozens of briefing have been given in conjunction with those reports. All of those reports and briefings have politicized the humanitarian situation in an unacceptable manner, as the following points clearly and undeniably demonstrate:

- The authors of the fiftieth report clearly show themselves to be in the service of certain influential States that, in order to advance their selfish agendas, spare no effort to exploit United Nations mechanisms according to their whims and in keeping with their desire to exercise hegemony over other States, interfere in their internal affairs and undermine their security and stability. For example, the authors ignore undeniable crimes of aggression simply because they were committed by the United States and its allies. The authors also ignore the war crimes and crimes against humanity that the United States and its allies have committed in Raqqah and other Syrian cities under the pretext of countering terrorism, and they pay no attention to the role played by the Governments of States that support terrorism, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. Those States continue to promote violence and terrorism, spread extremist ideology and hatred, and employ distorted religious doctrine to wage savage wars that clearly had their beginnings in the 1970s and are raging today with direct support from influential Western States in the Security Council and funding from their puppet regimes. In fact, terrorism and foreign terrorist fighters have now become the greatest threats to international peace and security thanks to the support of Western States that are permanent members of the Security Council and supposedly responsible for maintaining international security and peace under the Charter of the United Nations.

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Some Secretariat and OCHA officials have continued to engage in such conduct, in flagrant violation of Article 100, paragraph 1, of the Charter, which provides that "[i]n the performance of their duties [...] the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any government or from any other authority external to the Organization. They shall refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as international officials responsible only to the Organization."

- Certain States members of the Security Council view the reports on the humanitarian situation in Syria and the related briefings given by senior Secretariat officials as simply a tool that they can use to serve their agendas, level false accusations against the Syrian Government and obscure the great assistance and facilitation that Syrian State institutions provide to the United Nations and other governmental and non-governmental international organizations, in order to serve and meet the needs and strengthen the resilience of Syrians and increase their capacity to overcome the effects of the crisis. Those States continue to commit aggressions under various spurious pretexts and impose unilateral coercive economic measures against the Syrian people, measures that the United Nations has reaffirmed year after year as being unlawful and in violation of international law, the Charter and human rights principles. All of this became apparent on 14 April 2018 when the United States, the United Kingdom and France carried out their most recent tripartite attack on Syria, an attack that was justified by spurious pretexts and not sanctioned by the Security Council or a resolution of the Council. In that connection, we cannot fail to mention the American attack against the Sha'irat airbase last year.

- Over the past seven years, some United Nations staff have committed many irregularities that, in addition to being completely incompatible with the principles on humanitarian work that were endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/182, violate the sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic, the unity and territorial integrity of which the Security Council has reaffirmed must be respected in its resolutions on the situation in Syria. For example, the United Nations recently began to rely on illegal information-gathering operations. These transborder operations were begun surreptitiously by the offices of the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration in Gaziantep and Amman, which exploited needy Syrians and, through fraud and deception, employed them in illegal information-gathering activities that are tantamount to unlawful acts of espionage. As a result, those individuals, whom the United Nations calls key informants and whose numbers run into the hundreds, are liable to prosecution and the consequences thereof. Meanwhile, the authors of Secretariat and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reports continue to take false information provided by so-called non-State armed groups and their supporters, and by the White Helmets and other such organizations, which are the creations of intelligence agencies, and present it as substantiated information. On the other hand, some United Nations officials say that they cannot verify the information that they receive from the Syrian Government! How is it possible to build trust and enhance humanitarian cooperation in the face of such a politicized and hostile approach that is contrary to international law, the precepts of the Charter and United Nations resolutions?

The lack of professionalism and credibility has exceeded all acceptable bounds, as demonstrated by the authors' decision to suppress the report of the United Nations mission to assess the situation in Raqqah. The authors simply make a general reference to the report and take wording from it and present it in a very distorted manner, but they ignore what the report has to say about the catastrophic situation in

Raqqah and how its residents are suffering as a result of the serious crimes that the international coalition and its allied militias have committed.

In the light of the above, the Syrian Government reiterates its previous observations regarding the reports of the Secretariat on the humanitarian situation. It is disappointed that it must once again state that, despite the promises made by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock, the OCHA office in Syria and those in charge of it are not fulfilling their mandate in a professional, objective and credible manner. That is also true of OHCHR staff, who, for example, did not document any abuses that were committed during the Turkish aggression against Afrin and other regions, the crimes committed by the "international coalition" against Syrian civilians and infrastructure, or the crimes committed by armed terrorist groups, which only recently launched thousands of missiles at Syrian cities and civilian-populated areas.

We are aware that the facts that have come to light in those parts of Syria that have been liberated, or in which a reconciliation agreement has been concluded, and are now administered by the State offer the strongest proof of what we have stated repeatedly: the terrorists use civilians as human shields, seize humanitarian assistance, including food, medical supplies and other types of assistance, and respond with savagery to anyone who opposes them. That notwithstanding, we should like to remind the authors of the following:

- The Syrian State, its institutions and its national and international partners, in cooperation with international organizations, have made tremendous efforts to respond to the humanitarian needs of the people of eastern Ghutah who were liberated from the terrorists, and to provide them with health care, water and sanitation, education and shelter. In that connection, it should be noted that the Syrian Government has provided the required facilitation to United Nations organizations, including granting entry visas for nearly all United Nations officials, with the exception of those associated with OCHA because of the politicization and negative approach that characterizes its work.

- Although the authors state that only five convoys reached their destinations in the reporting period, they fail to mention that some areas designated by the United Nations as besieged or hard-to-reach had been liberated, or had concluded reconciliation agreements. Those developments have significantly reduced the number of areas on the list of besieged or hard-to-reach areas and greatly facilitated humanitarian access to those areas, including several parts of eastern Ghutah, and opened the door wide for the United Nations to do its part. However, the Syrian State and humanitarian workers once again find themselves faced with a situation in which international donors are backing out of their commitments and pressure is being placed on the United Nations to stop providing assistance to those areas, because they are now under "Syrian State control". This situation reveals the extent of the manipulation, the insincerity of the statements of concern about the Syrian people that have been made, and the discrimination that is being practiced in respect of Syrians on grounds that are completely unrelated to humanitarian needs. Syria holds OCHA, in particular, responsible for the lack of agreement on the annual response plan, because it has deliberately violated the rules of the United Nations and its agencies, and prioritized political goals that are incompatible with humanitarian action.

- The Syrian Government reiterates that it rejects any use of chemical weapons and that it has fulfilled its obligations in that regard. It also reiterates that it utterly rejects the allegations and lies that, unfortunately, have been fabricated by States members of the Security Council and propagated by their terrorist proxies, with a view to prolonging the crisis and legitimizing acts of aggression

that constitute flagrant violations of international law and the principles and provisions of the Charter. It is unacceptable for the authors of United Nations reports or Organization officials to accept or disseminate these allegations when the Syrian Government has asked for a fact-finding mission to be dispatched and provided all the facilitation that the mission needs to carry out its work.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic hopes that United Nations will adopt a new approach, one that will reaffirm the role that was envisioned for the Organization by the framers of the Charter and the founders of the United Nations, restore the credibility, professionalism and impartiality of the Organization, enhance cooperation and coordination with the Syrian State, help meet the humanitarian needs of Syrians, combat terrorism and preserve the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Syria calls upon the Security Council to review its resolutions concerning the humanitarian situation in Syria and address the flaws therein, including the questions of cross-border operations and the unconstructive work of OCHA, particularly in Gaziantep, which costs much money and ties up capacity. Indeed, the only purpose of that work is to serve the goals of the States that are fighting Syria. The Syrian Government also believes that it is necessary to consider what purpose is served by these monthly reports, which do not reflect the reality of the situation on the ground and have become something of a monthly ritual of justifying acts of terrorism and defending the perpetrators by proclaiming slogans that lack all credibility.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative